

will there be such a one again."

As Demas slid into the coma which precedes death by crucifixion, he murmured, "God, forgive us all." The chill spring rain which sprinkled his body reminded him dimly of dew on a morning rose. Suddenly, he was a child again, running to meet his Father with out-stretched arms.

Spring Comes

Sharon Sperry

SAM awoke just before the sunrise and lay quietly watching the slow change which spread against the sky. The heavy blanket of night folded itself against the west horizon and fell unnoticed behind the tree line revealing the pale pink sheet of dawn. The blush of red in the east turned bright and the sun slipped up over the mountains to lie couched in a light blue sky. A snow cloud had passed in the night and left a thin haze of crusty, white sheeting on the ground that crackled when the brown squirrel bounded from tree to tree. Each crackle brought a burst of chatter from the little bird who perched in the lilac bush. Sam pulled himself up to the window and, squinting against the glare, searched the ground for the small buds which would sprout from the flat brown seeds he had planted in the fall. It was too early for them, but he searched anyway, as he had every morning all winter, hoping they would bud out of season. The trees, too, showed only slick, black branches, one trailing a withered, brown leaf which had clung tenaciously throughout the fierce winds of fall and winter. It was a frail, twisted leaf, thin and brown like matted dust, petrified by winter hail and icy frosts. Yet, it seemed to have suckled from the branch the strength to hold its bond. Sam imagined it would be wonderful to see that leaf there when spring came, waving among the new leaves, whispering to them that life could be very long.

He turned over in his bed and waited to hear the rattling noises from the kitchen which would be his mother preparing breakfast. She brought it to him on a shiny silver tray that reflected his face in its bottom. When he began to eat, she sat down by his bed in a straight-backed chair and said, "Good morning." Neither of them talked in the morning. Sometimes he would tell her breakfast was good, but it was not necessary. She knew how to boil the poached eggs so soft that it felt like warm silk on his tongue.

When he had finished, she read aloud and he listened and dreamed. For the past month he had been unable to read. The words were a fuzzy line on creamy paper. His favorite story, the one she read a dozen times over, was of Arthur who pulled the sword and fought to build a glorious kingdom, then passed mysteriously away in a sailing ship surrounded by fair women. Arthur must have sailed a lake larger than Gossmyer's Lake at the top of his father's farm. Of the two tall pines that guarded the stream entrance to the lake,

one had fallen in a wind storm last summer and lay a few inches above the swirling brown stream water, bridging two points of land. Sam could remember how the lake looked when he lay flat, hugging the log. The peaked water stretched to the horizon, gray shifting mountains that held the sky until Sam could believe there was no more land, only endless gray peaks. But if he stood, he could see the other shore with its broken row of fence posts. As Arthur sailed his lake, he must have felt the same as Sam had lying on that log. He had sailed peacefully off the edge of the world because he knew if he stood he would see the fence posts.

Sam decided that Arthur had brown eyes. In the autumn, not long after he had planted the seeds, his mother and he had gone to an amusement park. It was small and dingy. Most of the rides were worn out. Even the merry-go-round turned in slow, perky circles, its music a dirge of tin notes. He knew that his mother had been disappointed. She had disliked the man with the shapeless chin whose eyes were a shiny, soft brown when he lifted Sam into the ferris wheel. Sam remembered how he had looked like a pile of rags from the top of the wheel, not like a man at all, but as the wheel turned and the ground rose slowly, the man had grown very tall until Sam had seen his eyes again, smiling and warm like rich, hot chocolate. They were beautiful eyes, just the eyes a king needed, and deep, so deep they held everything, not unlike the narrow, dark holes Sam had dug in the ground for the seeds. He would have planted all his seeds in one of those holes. They seemed to go forever into the center of the earth. Sam knew if he put his eye to them he would see the brilliant, distant glow of raging fires.

If the seeds sprouted—and they must soon, for spring was coming—it would be from sun and rain. So Sam watched the sun as much as the ground, begging of one to shine, urging the other to grow until, as the weeks passed, he began to feel a silent stream running between the three of them that grew stronger as the days lengthened. The sun was always above him in the sky, and he only needed to raise his eyes to see it shimmering down on him through the late winter days. April came, the sun moved north, closer to his window, and from the ground there was a bare showing of five pale green shoots. He watched them grow, calling down rain for them, but the bright yellow blooms which he knew would burst from the center stems never came.

He began a restless sleep, dropping off into vivid dreams and waking to a curious succession of suns. Phantoms wandered with him. A black woman with a hollow mouth and gaping round eyes stood in the heavy forest growth, dark and sunless, waiting silently for him to pass. He feared for his plants, suspecting her treachery. When he was awake, he studied the stems feverishly for signs of her theft. He pleaded with the sun, who smiled and hid behind a cloud. As Sam's eyes searched the sky, he saw clearly the work of the mad woman and despaired that he had guarded only his plants, for on the

tree limb, knobby with new growth, the old brown leaf was gone. In the absence of its raspy whisper was the impatient sound of supple twigs humming in the wind. It's gone, they said, it's gone, she's won, she's won, she's won. That evening after Sam had fallen into a dreamless sleep, the sun reached the topmost point of a western mountain, rested for a moment like a full, red bubble, then lost its balance and slipped over the edge. Punctured in the fall, it stained the sky a deep red that dried from purple to black.

Saint Anthony and The Snicker

R. Adams

WHEN Sir Lancelot of Twinkletoes adopted his family, they didn't know what to call him. Certainly, any one of his names would have been suitable, but Gentle Hands, who had a feeling for names, didn't like Lancelot and she thought Twinkletoes was trite. Their indecision was senseless to Sir Lancelot, but people are often senseless to little dogs.

One morning, about three weeks after Lancelot moved into his wicker basket, with the cushion that matched the breakfast room curtains, the Hands were having their coffee and toast. Lancelot sat in his basket and stared at them, waiting for a tid-bit. Warm hands, finally, became aware of the puppy's brown eyes and tossed a small crust to him. Lancelot grabbed it and ran to the dining room rug to eat it. He loved the dining room rug; it was white and had big, big, red roses splattered all over it. When he finished his morsel, he scampered up stairs to see if Gentle Hands had been too tired last night to put her slippers away. He had been attracted to those slippers ever since she had unpacked them, the day before. He sniffed about under the chaise and happily found what he sought.

In the meantime, Gentle Hands sat with a dictionary and the papers which contained Lancelot's family tree; she flipped through one, then the other. Finally, she had an idea. "Let's call him Snicker," she laughed, spilling coffee on her beige dressing gown.

"What!" demanded Warm Hands from behind the Wall Street Journal.

"You know, Lancelot; let's call him Snicker because he's little and impudent," explained Gentle Hands.

"And destructive," growled Warm Hands, retrieving what was left of the white satin slipper. Lancelot had been foolish to carry that slipper down to the breakfast room because he had gotten lonely. It had been quite a feat, and he was proud of himself, but his prowess went unnoticed. He got a scolding.

Time teetered on and he became accustomed to his new name, but he really didn't like it, it lacked dignity. However, he loved the Hands, Gentle, because she smelled like flowers and kissed him, Warm, because he fed him and took him for long walks, even if it was on a pink braided leash. Snicker had grown to a full three